

# The new wave of Aussie wines

*Forget about Yellowtail, these bottles are fresh and bright*

by **André Darlington**

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Carolyn Fath

Turn your world upside down with new Australian wines. **Australian wine has built a bad reputation for itself** over the past couple decades. It certainly doesn't help that ginormous bladders of industrial hooch cross the Pacific to be bottled on our shores as a watery and wretched thing called Yellowtail. Even the better stuff is often bred with heavy-handed hedonism to be big, jammy explosions that a Crocodile Dundee might enjoy out of a Solo cup.

But the same wind of change that is affecting the big Napa cabs of yore is blowing Down Under, and there's a new kind of Aussie wine that is well worth exploring. While once the exciting regions were warm spots like

Barossa Valley or McLaren Vale, new areas are on the radar -- relatively cool climate zones like Adelaide Hills and Yarra Valley. What's more, a new generation of winemakers is coaxing freshness and bright flavors out of vines that would have once been picked overripe to produce the old blockbusters.

The switch is showing up even in the naming conventions: Gary Mills of the winery Jamsheed calls his wine Syrah rather than Shiraz, the usual moniker for the Australian version of the grape varietal originally hailing from France. He wants to communicate on the bottle that he's targeting a more European style -- a restrained, lower-alcohol, less hefty Syrah. The result is a thing of beauty, although the Jamsheed Beechworth Syrah '12 will set you back \$50. To try a less pricey version, the entry La Syrah clocks in at \$26.

The change has affected not just flagship Shiraz, but Chardonnay as well. Michael Dhillon, the son of a visionary sheep farmer from Punjab, crafts stunningly beautiful Chardonnay from Bindi Winegrowers from vines planted in 1988. A locally available '08 bottling called "Composition" is intense, layered, toasty and quite spicy. For your \$65, you may have your perception of what Chardonnay can be forever altered.

Taras Ochota (pronounced oh-ko-ta), a former surfer, makes some of the best new-wave wines available. His Slint Vineyards Chardonnay (\$75) hails from the cool Adelaide Hills (vineyard elevation 1,800 feet), where the grapes are hand harvested at night, basket-pressed and left to ferment with wild yeast. The result is tantalizing: bright citrus fruit with good acidity but some richness from battonage -- a process where the wine is stirred

with a "batton" (think stick) to mix the fermentation yeast into the juice for added flavor. It's all beeswax and gunpowder, lithe and elegant.

If that's too pricey, Route Du Van Chardonnay from cool Yarra Valley is a crisp example of what's shakin' in the new Down Under, for \$21.

- See more at: <http://isthmus.com/food-drink/the-new-wave-of-aussie-wines/#sthash.84k3u7LG.dpuf>